

Date: October 31, 1988

To: Wisconsin Hospitals

From: Larry Tainter, Director  
Bureau of Quality Compliance

Subject: Obstetrical Services in Hospitals Without on Premise Cesarean Section Capability

Over the last several months, there has been much discussion focusing on the practice of performing vaginal deliveries in hospitals where no on premise cesarean section capability exists. After analysis of the language in HSS 124, the Wisconsin Administrative Code for Hospitals, the bureau has taken the following position.

It is acceptable to perform vaginal deliveries, which are anticipated to be normal, without an on premise cesarean section capability when certain provisions have been provided for by the governing board, administration, medical staff and nursing service. As a minimum the following provisions would need to be met:

1. The governing board would need to be cognizant of the following circumstances when approving privileges for vaginal deliveries: the absence of any backup, on premise cesarean section capability; and the necessity of the physician performing only vaginal deliveries that he/she anticipates to be normal.
2. The medical staff has established agreements with physicians and hospitals to accept transfer patients who may require an emergency cesarean section.
3. Arrangements are in place with emergency transport services for the possibility of future emergency transport of persons who may require emergency cesarean sections.
4. The hospital has made all reasonable provisions for supporting the life of the mother and unborn child until and during the execution of the emergency transport.
5. Any persons who are scheduled for delivery at the local hospital are apprised, at the time of the scheduling, of the fact that the hospital does not have an on premise, backup cesarean section capability.

Note: Individual circumstances of the hospitals and physicians may dictate that other points need to be addressed.

The Bureau of Quality Compliance staff realize the above conditions are not comparable or preferable to having an on premise cesarean section capability. However, we believe the conditions do represent compliance with the general provisions of HSS 124 and are a valid attempt to ensure the health, safety and welfare of both the woman and her unborn/newborn child.

If you have any further questions, please contact Phyllis Tschumper at (608) 266-0701.

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cc: Wisconsin Hospital Association  
State Medical Society  
Wisconsin Medical Record Association